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Further Notes on Automatic Conflagrations, the Hindu Method of Counting, and the Period of Pregnancy.—
By the Corresponding Secretary, E. WASHBURN HOPKINS.

At the last Meeting of the Society were read, as part of the annual correspondence, certain letters relative to points touched upon in previous communications made to the Journal by the present writer. Since then other notes or letters have been added concerning the same subject matter. Rather than have this material presented in separate secretarian reports, it has seemed best to bring it all together, as follows:

AUTOMATIC CONFLAGRATIONS.

In this Journal, xx., p. 217, attention was called to the parallel between Thucydides' account of a conflagration caused by the wind, igniting the branches of trees, and similar accounts in Brahmanic literature. Subsequently a Buddhistic parallel was sent to the writer by Professor Lanman, viz., Jātaka iii. 510 (10-11): *dve sākha aññamaññaṃ ghaṭṭesum, tato dhūmo uppaṭṭi, aggicūṇṇāni patimṣu*. Then an Arabic parallel was furnished by Professor Moore, who cited Lane's Arabic Lexicon, p. 2705, as follows: A certain Abū-Ziyād says: "There is no tree that surpasses the *marḥ* in yielding fire. Sometimes these trees are clustered and tangled together, and the wind blowing and striking one part of them against another, they emit fire and burn the valley." "This quotation," says Professor Moore, "is taken—which Lane does not note—from the *Tāj-al-ārūs*, vol. ii., 278. Freytag identifies the tree with the *cynanchum viminalis*." At the writer's request Professor Torrey has kindly looked up this questionable identification and given it as his opinion that it is a mistake on Freytag's part. Professor Torrey writes (after saying that there are other similar quotations): "The identification with *cynanchum viminalis* is probably mistaken. Niebuhr, cited by Dozy, says that the *marḥ* is an *asclepias* (*asclepias ignivoma*); see his *Description of Arabia*, Amsterdam, 1774, p. 142."

As to the physical possibility of the occurrence (which, if proved, might bear on the question how man obtained fire in some localities), the testimony of Rev. Richard Taylor may be added. He asserts, on p. 367 of his delightful *Te Ika a Māui*, that the friction of branches in a gale has caused trees to take fire. He does not say of what sort are the trees; further, the locality is given only by the rather vague addition "in the New Zealand forests." In modern India, bamboo-stalks are said to catch fire in this way; but whether this be true the deponent knoweth not.

THE GAṆDĀ METHOD OF COUNTING.

A letter from Dr. Grierson, apropos of the Sanskrit number eight, animadverted upon in the First Half of vol. xxiii., this Journal, gives an interesting account of how natives of India count by fours, which Dr. Grierson recognizes as the base of enumeration: "In counting coins, sets of four, i. e., *gaṇḍā*, are always used. The heap of coins is spread out on the table, and the counter puts each finger of the right hand on a coin, and draws the four coins toward him, and says "one." Then he draws another, and says "two," and so on up to four *gaṇḍās*, making sixteen, if he is counting for a native, and up to five *gaṇḍās*, making twenty, if he is counting for a European or a banker. The sixteen or twenty rupees are then put into a pile, and four of these sixteens, or five of these twenties, are grouped together. Under English influence the "twenty" is superseding the "sixteen" system everywhere. The five piles of twenty make up a hundred, which is of course convenient.

"So also in all other counting, the basis is either the *gaṇḍā* or the *kurī* or score. "Sixty-four" is sixteen *gaṇḍās*, and eighty is four score or else a score of *gaṇḍās*. Similarly the weight called *sēr* varies from place to place. In each place it is said to be so many *gaṇḍā*, the *gaṇḍā* in this case meaning the weight of four *pice*."

Dr. Grierson draws the conclusion that "the basis is certainly four, i. e., the four fingers of the hand." Fick, it will be recalled, says of *aṣṭāu*, octo, that (as a dual) it indicates the number eight, from the root *aś*, *oś*, "be sharp," as "the two

points of the hands, made by (extending) the fingers" (excluding the thumbs). Sixty-four and eighty (thousands) have always been typically big numbers in India.

DURATION OF PREGNANCY.

In regard to the statements made in this volume of the *Journal*, First Half, above, p. 19, concerning the months of pregnancy according to Vedic and Epic reckoning, Dr. Grierson writes (under date of Nov. 11, 1903): "It may interest you that natives of the present day compute the period of pregnancy as lasting ten lunar months. Cf. Temple, *Legends of the Panjab*, vol. I., p. 233, note. It is curious, however, that in folksongs of the east of Hindostan, we over and over again find the phrase 'eleven months + eleven days' as the period of pregnancy. When I read your article, I tried to-day to find an instance, but failed, but, all the same, I am certain of the fact. It is one of the commonplaces of such poetry. I was never able to find an explanation of it. Heroes, of course, have portentously long periods before they are born. This is a stock piece of folk miracle. For instance, *JASB.*, xlvii. (1878), Gōpīcandra was born eighteen months after his father's death, and was put into his mother's womb as a seven months' foetus, so that he was a twenty-five months' child. Note that twenty-five is two-and-a-half times ten. This is a common multiple to indicate superlative excellence. Have you met anything like eleven months + eleven days in the *Mbh.*?" To this question the writer replied negatively, suggesting also that $11 + 11$ was due simply to raising by one (so in his opinion the 3×11 gods were originally 3×10), as in $10 + 1$, $100 + 1$, etc. (by no means confined to inauspicious application), and was happy to receive (under date of Jan. 2, 1904) another communication from the same kind friend, in which further references were given; for the period of ten months and ten days, *JASB.*, xlvī., p. 213 (for other numbers, cf. p. 216); and for nine months ("in the tenth"), *ib.*, liv., p. 45, all repeating popular modern notions. In this letter Dr. Grierson agrees that " $11 + 11$ is what you say,—viz. $10 + 10$ raised one for the sake of perfection." As to the bearing on what was said above, p. 19, "it is a question of locality or popularity only; in many cases a "month" was thirty days; in other cases

it was a moon, not quite twenty-eight days, though reckoned as full twenty-eight," the persistence of tradition seems to support this view. "India," says Dr. Grierson, in the letter just cited, "never changes, and much that is difficult in Sanskrit can be explained from the modern vernacular literature." Certainly, the genial author's note on Tulasī Dāsa, JRAS., 1903, p. 464, where the "shouting frogs" are compared with Brahmanic students, the noise of the latter "exactly resembling the noise of a school of frogs," is another good illustration of the latter part of this claim. But as to the former, if India never changes, how has India changed so much ?